

CONSOLIDATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

is North, Chair
ler, Jaca
ur, Bierman
rginia DeForest
ul Griffin
bert E. Hartley
in House
reen Johnson
b Neir
in Perryman
uise Strander
a Verner
erett Wilcock
e Wolsey

April 14, 1995

The Honorable Cynthia Sullivan
Metropolitan King County Council
12th Floor, King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Regional Policy Committee

Dear Councilmember Sullivan:

The Consolidation Advisory Committee (CAC) wants to thank you and Seattle City Councilmember Tom Weeks for taking the time to meet with the CAC on March 14, 1995. Your frank portrayal of the issues and challenges facing the Regional Policy Committee (RPC) was most appreciated. We hope you and the RPC will not mind if we are equally frank about our concerns and expectations.

It is important to recognize that the Regional Policy Committee is unique. The RPC was created as part of a very difficult process to bring together two countywide governments. Expectations are that the RPC will exert strong leadership in developing a regional agenda for the County, cities and citizenry that will clarify and realign regional and local duties and responsibilities. This mission is very broad with freedom for the RPC to confront many regional issues that have been outstanding for years. The RPC's mere creation gave it magical powers to do just that. If the RPC finds itself struggling at its beginnings, that is understandable, but the public's tolerance is wearing thin. Criticism rightly has been directed at the RPC's parochialism. The focus of the struggle has been on process and the resulting failure to accomplish anything worthwhile. The Municipal League's review of the RPC's performance in its first year was a succinct and accurate summary of the situation and should be used as a guide by all the RPC members, both as individuals and as a group, in their work during 1995.

The Metro-King County merger brought major changes to County government, but other reforms appear necessary. Under Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 5038, local officials have a significant opportunity to cooperatively define responsibility for government services and their financing within King County. The bill allows two years to accomplish this task. We believe that the RPC's mission is to explore duties and responsibilities at both regional and local levels of government. We suggest the RPC consider how the SSB 5038 process can be used to accomplish this mission.

In addition, we suggest that the RPC re-read "A Regional Agenda for King County" dated January 1995, which was forwarded to King County Executive Gary Locke by the Select Committee on Regional Finances and Services (sometimes referred to as the Dick

Ford Committee). We call your attention to the six critical questions upon which the Select Committee reached a consensus. We repeat them here:

1. How can we develop a regional sense of community while being sensitive to local community interests?
2. How can we prepare a Regional Financing Plan or a Regional Governance Plan when all the key players are not at the table?
3. How do we define regional services?
4. How do we fund regional infrastructure and services?
5. What is the role of King County government in the (a) emerging urban areas; and, (b) rural areas. How do we pay for it?
6. How do cities, special districts and King County work together to establish levels of service and financing mechanisms for annexation areas?

The CAC believe that these are appropriate regional/local concerns that need answering. Of these, questions #3 and #5 have particular relevance to the RPC.

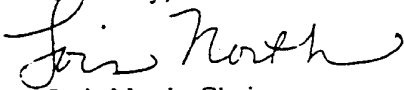
We believe that the RPC's work program on the transfer of public health responsibilities is a small, but important step in the right direction. We suggest that the RPC also consider adding to its work program the issues of law and justice services and human services which were identified at the March 1, 1995 SSB 5038 meeting as priority regional issues. It is important to find publicly acceptable and more efficient ways to improve service delivery on a regional/local basis.

Since the transfer of public health responsibilities is largely resolved by State law, it should not be a major challenge to the RPC and should not distract the Committee from taking on other, more challenging issues. Instead, it should be a model for how to address those other issues. Both Select Committee question # 2 and the experience at the March 1, 1995 SSB 5038 meeting suggest that the RPC needs to include the relevant stakeholders on each issue in the decision-making process. The CAC has already recommended in a letter dated June 22, 1994 to former RPC Chair Jane Hague that citizen involvement be tailored to the issues under discussion instead of relying on a single general purpose group.

The Honorable Cynthia Sullivan
April 14, 1995
Page 3

The CAC accepts your request to attend RPC meetings and will endeavor to have a CAC member in the audience. We also accept the role of constructive critic. We believe that the RPC was created to provide strong regional leadership in the development of a truly regional government and that the preceding recommendations will help the RPC fulfill this role. We will work with you towards this end.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lois North".

Lois North, Chair
Consolidation Advisory Committee

cc: Members, Regional Policy Committee
Members, Metropolitan King County Council
Gary Locke, King County Executive
Members, Seattle City Council
Elliott Newman, President, Suburban Cities Association
Eileen Quigley, Executive Director, Municipal League
Dick Ford, Chair, Select Committee on Regional Finances and Services